

Chapter 1: Introduction

Intent

The intent of the 2005–2014 White-tailed Deer Plan is to,

- Convey the Department's goals, and strategies employed to achieve those goals.
- Assist the Fish and Game Commission in developing policies, priorities, and direction for white-tailed deer management in Idaho.
- Provide overall direction to Department staff in developing and implementing the state's white-tailed deer management program.
- Assist others in developing plans and implementing programs that support or are compatible with white-tailed deer conservation and management.
- Encourage a cooperative approach to addressing white-tailed deer issues in Idaho.

This plan will remain in effect until revised. The next plan revision is scheduled to be completed by 2015.

Authority

This white-tailed deer plan provides the basis for Idaho's management of white-tailed deer as mandated by the Wildlife Policy of Idaho and Mission Statement for the Department, contained in Idaho Code, Section 36-103, which states,

All wildlife, including all wild animals, wild birds, and fish, within the state of Idaho, is hereby declared to be the property of the state of Idaho. It shall be preserved, protected, and managed. It shall only be captured or taken at such times or places, under such conditions, or by such means, or in such a manner, as will preserve, protect, and perpetuate such wildlife, and provide for the citizens of this state and, as by law permitted to others, continued supplies of such wildlife for hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Consistency with Strategic Planning

This plan is consistent with the Fish and Game Department's Strategic Plan, The Compass, including the following goals:

1. Sustain Idaho's fish and wildlife and the habitats upon which they depend.

Objectives

- ✓ Maintain or improve populations of game species to meet the demand for hunting.
- ✓ Ensure the long-term persistence of native fish, wildlife, and plants.
- ✓ Increase the capacity of habitat to support fish and wildlife.
- ✓ Eliminate the impacts of disease on fish and wildlife populations, livestock, and humans.

2. Meet the demand for fish and wildlife recreation.

Objectives

- ✓ Maintain a diversity of fishing, hunting, and trapping recreation.
- ✓ Sustain fish and wildlife recreation on public lands.
- ✓ Increase the opportunity for wildlife viewing and appreciation.
- ✓ Increase the variety and distribution of access to private land for fish and wildlife recreation.
- ✓ Maintain broad public support for fish and wildlife recreation and management.

3. Improve public understanding of and involvement in fish and wildlife management.

Objectives

- ✓ Improve citizen involvement in the decision-making process.
- ✓ Increase public involvement and understanding of Idaho's fish and wildlife and their management.

How the Plan was Developed

Revision of the 1998 White-tailed Deer Plan was initiated by request of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission in April 2003. During May 2003, a White-tailed Deer Planning Team was formed, including biologists from each region in the state. This group identified issues in the management of white-tailed deer in Idaho, and formed a set of questions to gain the public's perspective on the issues.

During August 2003, a survey was mailed to 2,000 Idaho deer hunters, and 578 rural landowners to assess opinions on a variety of issues associated with white-tailed deer management. Results were analyzed within 3 groups: 1.) hunters from the Panhandle and Clearwater Regions, 2.) hunters from the remaining 5 regions, and 3.) rural landowners from throughout the state. Results of the survey are contained in Appendix I.

In addition to the survey, public opinion on issues for plan development was sought through the Department's web site, at regional scoping meetings December 2003, and big game season-setting meetings during February 2004. Background information was then summarized from the literature and from analysis of Idaho data; and general management options and strategies were developed. During June 2004, management options and strategies were presented to sounding boards made up of white-tailed deer hunters.

The draft plan and questionnaire were completed during early September 2004 and made available on the Department web site beginning mid-September. Public opinion on the draft plan (see Appendix II) was then solicited in three manners: a random survey of 2,100 deer hunters, an open web-site questionnaire, and at public meetings during October and November 2004. The Fish and Game Commission approved this plan on January 20, 2005.

Statewide White-tailed Deer Management Goals

1. White-tailed deer will be managed for their unique characteristics and important significance as one of Idaho's wildlife resources.
2. White-tailed deer populations will be maintained under natural conditions in suitable habitat.
3. White-tailed deer populations will be managed to minimize depredation problems and disease occurrence.
4. IDFG will not actively encourage expansion of white-tailed deer in southern Idaho. However, whitetails will be managed in suitable habitats in southern Idaho where substantial overlap with mule deer does not occur.
5. IDFG will strive to provide a diversity of hunting opportunity including: long seasons, concurrent deer and elk hunting, either-sex hunting, and maintaining a reasonable opportunity for mature bucks.
6. IDFG will explore opportunities to implement management for higher percentages of mature bucks in some areas.
7. IDFG will work with landowners to improve general public hunting access to private land.
8. General white-tailed deer hunting seasons will be managed to minimize hunter crowding and maintain flexibility in available hunting locations.
9. Private landowners and land management agencies will be encouraged to accommodate habitat requirements for white-tailed deer.
10. IDFG will develop a better understanding of white-tailed deer populations throughout Idaho.
11. IDFG will improve monitoring for disease in white-tailed deer.